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**TAKEMITSU AND THE INFLUENCE OF “CAGE
SHOCK”: TRANSFORMING THE JAPANESE
IDEOLOGY INTO MUSIC**

by

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TAKEMITSU AND THE INFLUENCE OF “CAGE SHOCK”: TRANSFORMING THE JAOANESE IDEOLOGY INTO MUSIC

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University of Nebraska, 2010

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At the turn of the twentieth century, Toru Takemitsu (1930-1996) was regarded both domestically and internationally as a representative Japanese composer. He used elements of Japanese culture– music, gardens, and philosophy – in his music. Ironically, Takemitsu’s interest in Japanese music and culture was the result of an encounter with American composer John Cage (1912-1992). In turn, Cage’s unique musical philosophy was influenced by Japanese culture. This document takes a look at the effects of “Cage Shock” on Japanese composers, especially Takemitsu. In addition to presenting both composers’ incorporation of Japanese elements in their compositions, particularly Japanese Gardens, it also briefly discusses the history of Western music in Japan.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Western concert music, which has historically used a functionally tonal language, began to explore many other types of musical language. Composers were constantly seeking innovative types of concert music. The twelve-tone system appeared and the musical currents rushed towards atonal music. After the Second World War, the main thrust of compositional technique was serialism. However, many composers were unsatisfied with this approach, realized the limitations of serial music, and explored new compositional techniques. Terry Riley, Philip Glass and Steve Reich found a solution in minimalism; George Rochberg returned to tonal music; Krzysztof Penderecki and György Ligeti established textural music.

Another solution was achieved by the composer, writer and philosopher John Cage (1912-1992). In terms of influence, his real achievement was in his philosophy, rather than his creation of chance music. His philosophy stood the concept of music on its head and challenged musicians to consider several questions. What is music in the first place? What is the difference between sound and noise? What is silence? Through exploring Japanese Zen Buddhism, John Cage answered these questions and developed his unique musical philosophy.

Toru Takemitsu (1930-1996), one of the most reputable Japanese composers, was prompted to look back over his native Japanese music and culture as a result of an encounter with Cage. Hence, Takemitsu ironically re-imported Japanese music and culture through the American composer John Cage. The musical styles of the two composers are very different, although they received their muse from the same elements of Japanese culture. Their music is not necessarily similar in terms of stylistic and aesthetic tendencies, but both composers respected the other's music and recognized and accepted the value of the other's works.

John Cage was not the first non-Japanese composer to become interested in Japanese culture. In the twentieth century, many Western composers such as Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel, Sergei Prokofiev, Olivier Messiaen and Charles Griffes had been interested in Asian music, arts and culture and they employed these elements in their compositions. Their interests in Japanese culture, in turn, influenced many twentieth century Japanese composers who studied the compositional techniques and styles of these Western composers.

Clearly, re-importing Japanese culture had already happened before John Cage. However, the fundamentals of Cage's music did not lie in superficial compositional techniques or musical style, but were akin to the main elements of Japanese Zen ideology. One of the fundamental elements of the ideology is the

simultaneous presence and absence of all things. An example of this concept is the idea that if a person loses everything, at the same time they gain everything. It was from this pairing of two contradictory ideas that Cage established his own unique concept of music and shaped the way he thought about sound and silence. His interests in Japanese culture influenced many Japanese contemporary composers and largely contributed to the fundamental philosophy of Takemitsu.

This study will begin by reviewing Western music history in Japan and providing an overview of Takemitsu's historical background. Subsequent chapters will survey both Takemitsu's and Cage's life as composers. Then, it will explore how Cage developed the aesthetic and spiritual silence from the culture of Zen Buddhism and Cage's influence on Takemitsu. Next, it will examine Takemitsu's work *November Steps* with special emphasis on his musical philosophy. Chapter 8 will introduce concepts of Japanese gardens, a common interest of both composers. The chapter will focus on a piece by Takemitsu, *Arc*, and a series of pieces by Cage, *Ryoanji*, that were inspired by a particular garden at a Japanese temple. Finally, the document will look at how Cage and Takemitsu grasped and developed the same resources and the effect of those resources on their compositions.

Chapter 2: Emergence of Western Music in Japan

Emergence of Western Music in Japan and the Second World War

Early in the seventeenth century the Japanese feudal government closed itself off from the outside world. This policy, called *Sakoku*, which means to break off relations with other countries, prohibited foreign travel and through it, Japan entered an era of isolation. The main reason for *Sakoku* was that the government was afraid of the Christian influence in Japan. Only the non-Catholic Dutch were allowed to maintain commerce relations, although they were forced to move their offices to the small island Dejima, which lies within the city of Nagasaki.

In 1858 the strong overtures of the United States pried open the gates of Japan. During the Meiji period¹ (1868-1912) in 1868, Japanese people suddenly came into contact with many kinds of foreign music. However, the start of the western-style composition in Japan and of the cross-pollination between Japan and the other countries began at the Paris World Exposition in 1889. Many European impressionist composers and artists, like Debussy and Monet, were influenced by Japanese culture at that time. The twentieth century has seen a reversal of this late nineteenth century trend, and a Japanese school of western composition has emerged.

¹ A Japanese era name based on the reign of the current emperor: Meiji, Taisho, Showa and Heisei. The year 2010 is Heisei 22.

Japanese composers modeled their works mainly on German classical and romantic music, but at the same time they struggled with these foreign musical traditions that suddenly came into their country. The Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music established a composition major in 1932 and composers in embryo finally got a chance to study composition through systematic education. However, in the twentieth century Japanese composition was thrown into chaos and fluctuation because of the Second World War.

When the Second World War started in 1941, Japan was in an awkward position immediately and did not even have adequate materials for weapons. Starting on December 8 of the same year, audiences had to bring iron, copper or an old record instead of money to buy concert tickets. The sale of brass instruments and gut strings was forbidden because these materials were needed for arms production.²

During the Second World War, the Japanese were given restricted information on everything about other countries. In the *Music Culture Newspaper* on December 20, 1941, there is an interesting quote. “Not only existing American and English composers’ works, but also the deceased composers’ works are not

² Makoto Meguro. *Ongakugeijutus Bessatsu Twentieth-Century Composition of Japan*, ed. Yasushi Hori. (Tokyo: Ongaku no Tomosha, 1999), 30.

allowed to be performed.”³ This entailed all styles of music including classical, popular, and jazz. The audience could not listen to western music in general and composers did not have the right to compose whatever works they wanted. Their works would be played by radio stations and orchestras, but only if they composed the convenient and suitable works required by the Japanese government. The Second World War can be considered the second *Sakoku* period in the Japanese history of Western music.

After the Second World War

In 1945, the Second World War came to an end with the dropping of atomic bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima, and with the subsequent American occupation of Japan. The Japanese government lifted the jazz ban in the same year. When American soldiers and sailors came to Japan they played jazz in their camps. Many Japanese were interested in jazz and the dances associated with it and, consequently, various kinds of amusement facilities were built, especially in Tokyo.

Instead of being supported by the government, broadcasting stations, orchestras and recording companies were privatized, thus giving the composers who worked for them much greater creative freedom. Now, they could compose

³ “Ongaku Bunka,” in *Music Culture Newspaper*, December 20, 1941, 1.

whatever they wanted, and could have their compositions performed whenever they wanted. At the same time, composers attempted to get away from simple imitation of European music and tried to develop their own style. They started to search old Japanese texts, traditional musical forms, and traditional musical sounds and tried to fuse their own national identity with western music, just as Bartók did.

Young Japanese composers took an interest in jazz as well. Toshiro Mayuzumi (1929-1997) and Toshi Ichiyanagi (1933-) both had jobs in American camps as jazz pianists. Mayuzumi was especially absorbed in jazz as a symbol of free music, and he composed several works with jazz elements in 1947-1955. One of the works *Kyouden (Banquet, 1954)*, which is now being performed and appreciated once again, was performed by the New York Philharmonic, conducted by Leonard Bernstein, in 1961. Bernstein was admittedly influenced by this piece when he composed the famous musical *West Side Story*.⁴ Koji Taku, a composer who studied piano with Cortot in Paris, started composing modern dance pieces for jazz band and jazz trio (harpsichord, violin, and cello) from around 1950. Toshihito Ohsawa, who studied with Jean Roger-Ducasse in Paris, composed *Jazz Variations* in 1946.

⁴ Meguro, *Ongakugeijutsu*, 43.

Chapter 3: Toru Takemitsu's biography

Before the Second World War

Toru Takemitsu was born in Tokyo in 1930, and one month later was taken to China, where his father was working. His father was not a musician but was a jazz lover and frequently played recordings of American jazz. Thus, Takemitsu's first musical acquaintance was American jazz. In 1938, he returned to Japan of his own accord to attend Japanese elementary school. He was taken in by his aunt who had four sons, one of whom, Mikio, was close to Takemitsu's age.

Takemitsu's aunt played the *koto*, the Japanese traditional harp. Mikio would play his mother's *koto* for fun and often changed the tuning of the instrument. When he was older, Mikio left to work for the air force. One day his mother noticed that the tuning had changed as Mikio had done before. The next day word came that the son had died in an accident.⁵ Takemitsu's uncle was abusive and rarely home. One day, he beat Takemitsu's aunt and a part of the *koto* flew out to the yard. After that, the *koto* was hoarded in a storehouse for a long time. Shortly before her death, Takemitsu's aunt began to play the instrument again. She told Takemitsu, "I played

⁵ Toru Takemitsu, "Shi no Meguri." In *Watasitachino Mimi wa Kokoeteiruka*, (Tokyo: Nippon Tosho Center, 2000), 106.

the *koto* for my lost son and parents.” From that point on, the sound of the *koto* always made him very sad and depressed.

Takemitsu and the Second World War

Takemitsu had to spend his passionate and impressionable boyhood in chaotic times. When he was eleven years old, the Second World War began. During the war, he was working at a camp, carrying food for Japanese soldiers to a storehouse in a mountain. He often said in both interviews and essays that these were really hard times. Although he was only a thirteen-year-old boy, he was forced to work and treated like the other soldiers, which sometimes included being beaten and ordered to run in the mountains without any reason.

Initially, Takemitsu did not have any interest in music. During the Second World War, he could only listen to military songs and they were only annoying for him. However, in 1944, a soldier who was originally a university student played Takemitsu a recording on a phonograph in secret.⁶ At that time, Japanese citizens could not have phonographs or records. The slogan of Japan was “luxury is the enemy,” and luxury items were confiscated by the government. The university

⁶ Toru Takemitsu. *Tooi Yobigoe no Kanata e [Beyond the Fall Calls]* (Tokyo: Shinchosha, 1992), 27.

student made a needle by a twig and played the prohibited phonograph. The music Takemitsu heard was a French chanson, *Parlez moi d'amour*, sung by Lucienne Boyer. Although he did not even know what type of music it was, Takemitsu was extremely impressed. He thought it was too beautiful to describe in words and decided that he would become a musician after the war.

From Postwar to Encounter with Cage

Takemitsu's development as a musician was not exceedingly smooth sailing. Additionally, he was in poor health. After the Second World War, he went back to school and was eager to learn everything, but at that time the school was not completely functional. According to Takemitsu, everyone, including teachers, was more interested in finding the black market in order to buy food than studying.⁷ He left school before graduation with an ambition to become a composer, being self-taught in music. He was encouraged to study composition at the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music. He participated in the first day of the audition but did not go back the second day. He perceived the atmosphere of the university and content of the audition to be unsuitable for his style. Above all, the

⁷ Toru Takemitsu, "Watashi no uketa Ongakukyouiku." In *Watasitachino Mimi wa Kokoeteiruka*, (Tokyo: Nippon Tosho Center, 2000), 20-21.

systematic education was unacceptable. He studied composition with composer Yasuji Kiyose (1900-1981) in 1948, but left him after several months.

Takemitsu's first pieces were composed before he owned a piano so he worked from a keyboard that he drew on a piece of paper and always kept with him. At times he was able to use the piano in the cafeteria of an American camp where he worked as a waiter. His first piece, *Two Lento* (1950), was criticized as “pre-music” by the critic Ginji Yamane because it was unprecedentedly unique.⁸

In 1953, he was confined to bed by tuberculosis. Although he could barely eat, he continued to write music. When he took a small turn for the better, he paid no heed to the doctor's caution and escaped from the hospital to conduct an orchestra performance.⁹ During his recovery he devoured music on the radio network set up for the American Armed Forces. He mentioned music of Claude Debussy, Gabriel Fauré and César Franck as his favorites at that time. He was also introduced to the music of Olivier Messiaen, with whom he was fascinated, by Toshi Ichiyanagi, who would later introduce John Cage to Japan. Takemitsu also became interested in *musique concrète* for a short time. He studied music of German composers Arnold Schoenberg and Anton Webern although his preference was for modern French music,

⁸ Makoto, *Ongakugeijutsu*, 9.

⁹ Asaka Takemitsu, *Sakkyokuka, Takemitsu Toru tonno Hibi wo Kataru* (Tokyo: Shogakukan, 2006), 24.

like that of Debussy and Ravel. He consciously avoided paying attention to Japanese traditional music. Listening to Japanese music reminded him of many disgusting memories from the War.¹⁰

However, his eyes were eventually turned toward Japanese traditional music and Japanese culture, and one of the significant reasons for this change was an encounter with the American composer John Cage (1912-1992).

現在、欧米の影響をこうむった日本人と、東洋文化の刻印をとどめる西洋人とはひとつの遭遇地点にまで歩みよっています。両者は同一平面に位置づけることができますが、さかさまの道を辿ってそこに到達したのです。ジョン・ケージのやり方は私にはやはりきわめて論理的であり、極端な場合それは私にはたいへん「しんどい」ものになります。反対に、日本人が西洋音楽に影響される時、それはもっと流動的であり、ああいった論理性を欠きます。とは言っても、少なくとも私はジョン・ケージに感謝しないわけにはいきません。なぜなら、私にとってはある時期まで、「日本」はすべからく否定されるべき対象としてのみあったのですが、かれによって日本の良い伝統に目を向けることができたからです。(中略)そしてジョン・ケージはまた、禅や鈴木大拙から多くの影響を受けたのです。現在は、文化の相互循環についてそれがどっちが先でどっちがあとだったかということを問うのはもはや意味がない、ということは既に了解に達していると思います。

The Japanese, who have been influenced by the West, and the Westerners who have been affected by eastern culture, have finally come face to face. They are now on the same page, although they made it from opposite directions. I find John Cage's approach extremely logical and, in some cases, quite exhausting, whereas the way the Japanese have been influenced by western music is more fluid and lacks such logic. Nevertheless, I must thank John Cage, because he shifted my attention to the positive sides of Japanese culture; I had long regarded "Japan," and anything related to it, as

¹⁰ Takemitsu. *Tooi Yobigoe*, 28.

things that are supposed to be rejected.... Also, John Cage was heavily influenced by Zen and Daisetsu Suzuki. It has now been agreed that there is not much point in arguing which influenced which first in terms of mutual circulation of cultures.¹¹ [Author's translation]

¹¹ Ibid., 26.

Chapter 4: John Cage

As mentioned earlier, Cage's chance music was introduced to Japan in 1961 by the composer Toshi Ichiyanagi, who had worked with Cage and also enjoyed the friendship of Takemitsu. In 1962, Cage was invited to Japan with a pianist, David Tudor, by the music group "Sougetsu Art Center," and gave a performance in Tokyo. The Japanese reaction to this new music is often described as "Cage Shock," a name invented by Hidekazu Yoshida, a Japanese music critic.¹² Takemitsu was the first Japanese composer who deeply sympathized with Cage's music and Ichiyanagi wrote that Takemitsu's interest encouraged his own desire to introduce Cage's music to Japan.¹³

Cage studied architecture in Paris, but abandoned it because he was interested "in so many other things."¹⁴ When he was in his late twenties, he was acquainted with many artists, like composer Pierre Boulez and pianist John

¹² Meguro, *Ongakugeijutsu*, 67.

¹³ Toshi Ichiyanagi, "Keji eno kyōkan wo toshite [Through the sympathy with Cage]." In *Takemitsu Toru no Sekai* [The world of Toru Takemitsu], ed. Masaki Saito, and Maki Takemitsu (Tokyo: Shueisha, 1997), 209.

¹⁴ John Cage, *Musicage: Cage Muses on Words, Art, Music*, ed. Joan Retallack (New England: Wesleyan University Press, 1996), 84.

Kirkpatrick. He also frequented the galleries in Paris and viewed the different kinds of modern art, like that of Klee, Picasso and Matisse. After he left Paris, he traveled to Italy and North Africa in Majorca where he stayed for a month and began to pursue his interests – without instruction – in both writing music and drawing.

After returning to the United States, he was introduced to Arnold Schoenberg by Henry Cowell. While attending Schoenberg's classes he also studied harmony with Adolph Weiss (who was the first American pupil of Schoenberg in California) for a year. Schoenberg once told his class "my goal, the goal of my teaching, is to make it impossible for you to write music."¹⁵ He told Cage that he would never be able to compose, because he would always find himself in front of a wall – harmony – that he would never be able to get through. Cage replied to Schoenberg, "I would spend my life banging my head against that wall..."¹⁶ and decided to devote his entire existence to writing music.

Cage tried to extend Schoenberg's dodecaphonic methods in his early works.¹⁷ In the late 1930s, he was interested in the infinite number of sound sources,

¹⁵ John Cage, *For the Birds*, ed. Pierre Belfond (New Hampshire: Marion Boyars Inc., 1981), 71.

¹⁶ Ibid., 72.

¹⁷ James Pritchett, "John Cage," in *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy, Accessed [2. January 2009], <http://www.grovemusic.com>

from a trash heap or a junk yard, to a living room or kitchen, and explored instrumental possibilities not yet catalogued.¹⁸ This was probably the first occurrence of his interest in noise as a musical sound.

He was also interested in the East, first with India, then later, China and Japan. Between 1946 and 1947 he began to become seriously interested in the Orient. After studying Oriental thought as a whole, he took Daisetsu Suzuki's courses for three years.¹⁹ He said in an interview, "...when I discovered India, what I was saying started to change. And when I discovered China and Japan, I changed the *very fact of saying anything*: I said nothing anymore. Silence: since everything already communicates, why wish to communicate?"²⁰

Cage was especially interested in Japanese Zen Buddhism. He described one of his experiences with Japan and the influence of Zen:

Okuyama [A Japanese engineer] comes from Kyoto, and has what is so special – at least in my experience – to the Japanese people: a high regard for things in the world, for plants, for wood, for metal, for the things of nature. This special regard is perhaps given to them by the Buddhist doctrine that there are two types of being in the world, sentient and

¹⁸ John Cage, *For the Birds*, ed. Pierre Belfond (New Hampshire: Marion Boyars Inc., 1981), 73-74.

¹⁹ Ibid., 94.

²⁰ Ibid., 103.

nonsentient, and they both share in Buddhahood²¹ This high regard is quite rare in the U. S. and Europe but is quite noticeable in Japan.²²

On another occasion, he said:

Instead I got involved with Oriental philosophy and that performed for me the function that psychoanalysis might have performed. But, in performing it, Zen is almost characterized by an insistence on an utterly realistic approach and one that ends in humor.²³

Although he was interested in Zen Buddhism, Cage never had the experience of formal Zen training.

Rather than taking the path that is prescribed in the formal practice of Zen Buddhism itself, namely, sitting cross-legged and breathing and such things, I decided that my proper discipline was the one to which I was already committed, namely, the making of music. And I would do it with a means that was as strict as sitting cross-legged, namely, the use of chance operations, and the shifting of my responsibility from the making of choices to that of asking questions.²⁴

If he had practiced Zen and achieved *satori* (buddhahood) as a Buddhist priest, Cage might not have created such unique concepts as the piece *4'33"*. Zen requires that a person put the worldly desires, worries and all other thoughts out of their mind.

Though they can physically hear noises and accept all natural sounds and happenings,

²¹ Buddhahood is the state of spiritual enlightenment attained by Buddha.

²² John Cage, *Contemporary Japanese Music*, A lecture by John Cage, in *Locating East Asia in Western Art Music*, ed. Yayoi Uno Everett, Frederick Lau (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), 195.

²³ Richard Kostelanetz, *Conversing with Cage* (New York: Limelight Editions, 1987), 13.

²⁴ Christopher Shultis, *Silencing the Sounded Self, John Cage and the American Experimental Tradition* (Boston: Fallen Leaf Press, 1995), 93.

they should not consciously listen to them. It is true that meditation and chance music are similar in certain respects, sitting tight and doing nothing, but the concept or purpose is different. While the purpose of Zen is to eliminate distractions and nullify oneself, the purpose of *4'33"* is to gain and accept all kinds of noise and distraction.

The concept of *4'33"* has made a major contribution in the field of music through the principles of Zen, but Cage's interest in Zen was only as a composer and philosopher, not as a man of religion. He kept a distance from the religion and was interested only in the philosophical aspects of Zen Buddhism from an independent standpoint. This point is particularly remarkable and important.

In addition, Cage's musical approach of using Japanese Zen Buddhism is different from previous European composers who were interested in Japanese and other Asian culture. To borrow Daniel Charles' words:

‘Oriental influences’ are usually noticeable only at the tonal or formal levels in the works of composers who nonetheless do not at all alter their vision of the world. When Messiaen uses the *tala*, he is no less a Catholic musician. On the other hand, you (Cage) seek first of all to renovate your mental equipment.”²⁵

Hence, other composers' compositions persistently conform to the Western music tradition and Asian influences are like a little spice or essence. Cage's music, on the

²⁵ John Cage, *For the Birds*, ed. Pierre Belfond (New Hampshire: Marion Boyars Inc., 1981), 106.

other hand, shows Asian, specifically Japanese, influences at the conceptual level.

Cage wrote in the book *Silence*,

New music: new listening. Not an attempt to understand something that is being said, for, if something were being said, the sounds would be given the shapes of words. Just an attention to the activity of sounds.²⁶ ... And what is the purpose of writing music? One is, of course, not dealing with purposes but dealing with sounds. Or the answer must take the form of paradox: a purposeful purposelessness or a purposeless play. This play, however, is an affirmation of life – not an attempt to bring order out of chaos nor to suggest improvements in creation, but simply a way of waking up to the very life we're living, which is so excellent once one gets one's mind and one's desires out of its way and lets it act of its own accord.²⁷

²⁶ John Cage, *Silence* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1960), 10.

²⁷ Ibid., 12. Silence

Chapter 5: Influence of John Cage

“Cage Shock”

After the Second World War, the worldwide dogma of composition was integral serialism, some of which contains rhythmic and polyphonic complexity too difficult for performance by human beings. The issue of whether or not audiences can understand or enjoy music that cannot be performed by human beings raises other questions: what, then, is music, and for whom is it composed? Cage’s reaction to this strict technique of composition was to look for music in everyday sounds and compose music, in his own words, with “no purpose.”²⁸

Cage’s concept of silence and chance music is all too simple and easy, and this is why it was so surprising to many Japanese composers, although at the same time completely compatible with traditional Japanese culture and ideals. Additionally, Cage acquired this concept through his interests in Japanese Zen Buddhism. Cage said about “Cage Shock,” after his performance in Tokyo with David Tudor,

From a musical point of view, I think that what we played for them gave them the chance to discover a music that was their own – rather than a twelve-tone music. Before our arrival, they had no alternative other than

²⁸ Ibid., 17.

dodecaphony. Neo-classicism was not really accessible to them, because it would have meant a simple return to their classicism. In fact, our music, that is, the music David Tudor played for them, was the only music that could afford them an appreciation analogous to their appreciation of traditional Japanese music, something they couldn't find in the different modern musics. So we deserve a small part of the credit for the fact that contemporary Japanese music features elements similar, although not identical, to those of ancient Japanese music.²⁹

It is no wonder, then, that Cage's ideas came as a shock to Japanese composers, who perhaps were mystified by this music's connection with their culture, and who were themselves finding new ways of composition in totally different directions. "Cage Shock," to put it in other words, was re-imported Zen Buddhism.

After "Cage Shock"

Takemitsu experienced "Cage Shock" along with the rest of Japan and his interest at this time turned toward chance music. He composed several chance pieces: *Ring* (1961), *Corona* (1962), and *Dorian Horizon* (1966). *Ring* can be divided into four sections which are based on letters from its title: Retrograde, Inversion, Noise and General theme. Much of the rhythmic detail and ensemble collaboration are left to the freedom of the performers. The order of the four sections is not specified and between them are three improvised interludes.

²⁹ John Cage, *For the Birds*, ed. Pierre Belfond (New Hampshire: Marion Boyars Inc., 1981), 200.

Takemitsu was also inspired by Cage's *String Quartet in Four Parts* (1951), specifically the spacing of the instruments on the stage.³⁰

In 1964, after Takemitsu attended the David Tudor Music Festival in San Francisco, he went to Hawaii with Cage and painter Jasper Johns to attend the Honolulu New Music Festival. The time spent at the festival deepened the friendship between Cage and Takemitsu which lasted until Cage's death in 1992. Takemitsu enjoyed simple conversations and experiences with Cage and perceived something important from not only Cage's musical concept, but also from his everyday life.

As we walked through the forest, the trees and flowers constantly changed their appearance. John Cage was well informed about plants and about highly developed fungi. We found a bone-white mushroom looking like a stone growing beside an old tree trunk. Cage said, "This is probably as old as you are." The mushroom seemed to be the image of silence. We stared at it for some time. Why is he interested in things like mushrooms?

Cage said he goes out hunting mushrooms whenever he has free time. He said it is difficult to distinguish the poisonous varieties. One has to eat them to find out. In addition, some that are harmless when eaten raw become poisonous when cooked, and vice versa. He said it is quite mysterious. "Where does the poison come from, and where do you think it disappears to?"³¹

³⁰ James Siddons, *Toru Takemitsu, A Bio-Bibliography* (London: Greenwood Press, 2001), 46.

³¹ Takemitsu, *Confronting*, 30.

On a different occasion, Takemitsu told a poet Makoto Ôoka that the poison does not disappear, it goes *somewhere*. Where is the *somewhere*? The *somewhere* is a very active space, thus it is the activity itself. This kind of window into Cage's view of the world was very interesting and meaningful for Takemitsu.³²

From Cage I learned life – or I should say, how to live and the fact that music is not removed from life. This simple, clear fact has been forgotten. Art and life have become separated, and specialists are concerned with the skeletons of methodology. Aesthetics led us to music without any relationship to live sound, mere symbols on paper. John Cage shook the foundations of Western music and, with almost naive clarity, he evoked silence as the mother of sound. Through John Cage, sound gained its freedom. His revolution consisted of overthrowing the hierarchy in art.³³

The more Takemitsu understood Cage's philosophy, the more he had to reconsider sound, silence, and music.

John Cage speaks of the “insides of sounds.” This may seem like mysterious talk, but he is only suggesting that we include all kinds of vibrations in what we accept as a musical sound. We tend to grasp music within the confines of the smothering superficial conventions of composed music. In the midst of all this the naive and basic act of the human being, listening, has been forgotten. Music is something to be listened to, not explained.³⁴

Takemitsu personally leaned toward Japanese traditional music, arts, culture and

³² Shinji Saitô and Maki Takemitsu (eds.), *Takemitsu Tôru no Sekai* [The world of Tôru Takemitsu], (Tokyo: Shuei Sha, 1997), 72.

³³ Toru Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, Selected Writings, ed. Yoshiko Kakudo and Glenn Glasow (Berkeley: Gallen Leaf Press, 1995), 137.

³⁴ Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, 27.

ideology, and was confronted with two fundamental ideologies, that which he originally or unconsciously had as Japanese, and the cultivated ideology as a Western music composer.

Chapter 6: *November Steps* for *biwa*, *shakuhachi* and orchestra

One of Takemitsu's most meaningful experiments was an attempt to fuse the sounds of Western traditional instruments and Japanese traditional instruments. He was interested particularly in the *biwa*, a Japanese plucked lute, and the *shakuhachi*, an end-blown bamboo flute. He composed *Eclipse*, for *biwa* and *shakuhachi*, in 1966. The Japanese conductor Seiji Ozawa listened to this piece and was impressed with it. He brought the recording of this piece back to the United States, and it caught the attention of the American conductor and composer Leonard Bernstein. Subsequently, Takemitsu was commissioned by the New York Philharmonic Orchestra to compose a piece for Japanese traditional instruments and orchestra, and thus composed his masterpiece, *November Steps* (1967), which contains eleven variations.

Takemitsu named the title *November Steps* because it was performed in November and also because the project represented a new step to him. Additionally, his choice of "Step" in the title finds significance in the Japanese language. It comes from the Japanese word for variation, *danmono*, from which he extracted *dan*, which means "step."³⁵

In Takemitsu's essay, he confessed about the composition of this piece:

³⁵ Takemitsu, *Confronting*, 63.

I was young, had never been abroad, was happy with this request, and began composing. I came to realize that a fundamental, indescribable difference existed between Western and Japanese instruments.... I thought of giving up but reconsidered. It became important to me to show an American audience the fundamental differences between modern European and traditional Japanese music. It might well be that as a composition it would fail, but I completed the work in order to show as great a difference between the two traditions as possible without blending them.³⁶

The *biwa* (Example 1a) was originally played by a *biwahoshi* (Example 1b), who is a blind storyteller. The stories the *biwahoshi* tells are, in most cases, scary or sad. The sound of the *biwa* is distinct and often makes people uneasy. The *shakuhachi* (Example 2a) was originally played by a *komusô* (Example 2b), who makes a provincial tour for ascetic practice as a Buddhist priest.

Example 1a

*Biwa*³⁷

Example 1b

*Biwa-hôshi*³⁸

³⁶ Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, 62.

³⁷ *Heike Biwa*, homepage3.nifty.com Accessed [February 5, 2009]

Example 2a

*Shakuhachi*³⁹

Example 2b

*Komusô*⁴⁰

Japanese Musical Terms: *sawari*, *ichion jobutsu* and *ma*

Since two traditional Japanese instruments are employed in *November Steps*, it will be helpful to know some Japanese musical terms. This section will define three Japanese musical terms as well as present a short discussion of the fundamental differences in Japanese and Western music's aesthetic values.

Takemitsu was especially interested in *sawari* and sought a more native

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ *Shakuhachi*, <http://ja.wikipedia.org> Accessed [February 5, 2009]

⁴⁰ *Keisuke Zenyoji*, <http://zenyoji.jp> Accessed [February 5, 2009]

Japanese concept through it. This word has many different meanings: obstacle (e.g. ear + *sawari* means harsh on the ear), touch, and feel. In musical terminology, *sawari* refers to a single harsh sound, which is considered the beauty of Japanese music though it is very foreign to most people, non-Japanese and Japanese.

In Western concert music, a more sophisticated, pure and clear sound is ideal because Western music is a musical architecture of notes. The clear sound is necessary for building or constructing music. Musical instruments have developed and performers have been disciplined to create the clear sound. However, in Japanese music, the fundamental concept of “good” sound is different. In the case of the bamboo flute, the *shakuhachi*, the ideal sound is that of wind blowing through a grove of bamboo. In the case of the Japanese lute, the *shamisen*, the ideal *sawari* is the same as the sound of a cicada’s chirp.

In addition, Western music is best expressed when separated from nature in the confines of the concert hall. On the other hand, the essence of Japanese music is to integrate nature with sound.⁴¹ According to Takemitsu,

“They [sounds] seem to resonate through the performer, then merge with nature to manifest themselves more as presence than as existence. In the process of their creation, theoretical thinking is destroyed. A single strum of the stings or even one pluck is too complex, too complete in itself to

⁴¹ Toru Takemitsu, *Ki no Kagami, Sougen no Kagami* (Tokyo: Shinchousha, 1975), 150-152.

admit any theory.”⁴²

Unlike Western musical sound, the single note is very strong and perfectly complete.

The musical term, *ichi-on jôbustu*, associated with the Japanese bamboo flute, the *shakuhachi*, suggests that the universe is explored in a single sound. A single sound is also one way to attain Buddhahood. Takemitsu thought,

With one sound one becomes the Buddha... suggesting that the universe is explored in a single sound... So, with some exaggeration, I might say God dwells in a single sound.⁴³

While words like *ma* or *sawari* have actual technical meanings, at the same time they [Japanese performers] convey a metaphysical aesthetic. I [Takemitsu] think that as a people who developed the concept of *Ichi-on Jôbustu* the Japanese found more meaning in listening to the innate quality of sound rather than in using sound as a means of expression. To them natural sound or noise was not a resource for personal expression but a reflection of the world.⁴⁴

Regarding the *biwa*, *sawari* is made by pushing the string down between the frets. Since the strings are stretched loosely and the frets are more than an inch high, a variety of pitches can be produced, depending on how hard one presses down on the string.⁴⁵

There is part of the neck of the *biwa* where four or five strings are stretched

⁴² Takemitsu, *Confronting*, 51.

⁴³ Burt, *The Music of Toru Takemitsu*. 253.

⁴⁴ Takemitsu, *Confronting*, 56.

⁴⁵ William P. Malm, *Japanese Music and Musical Instruments* (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1974), 143.

over a grooved ivory palate. When a string is stretched between these grooves and plucked, it strikes the grooves and makes a noise. The concave area of this ivory plate is called the “valley of the *sawari*,” the convex area the “mountain of the *sawari*,” and the entire plate simply *sawari*. When a string is stretched between these grooves and plucked, it strikes the grooves and makes a noisy “bin.”⁴⁶

Another significant musical term is *ma*. Some direct translations are space, room, interval, rest, time, timing, luck, chance, etc. As a Japanese musical term *ma* refers to a pause, or interval. As mentioned before, since the single sound is so strong and complete, it causes a strong silent space between sounds. This space is called *ma*. However, *ma* is not only a concept in time, but it is also philosophical term. Welsh composer Hilary Tann gave a great example.

I once heard a *shakuhachi* master talking about how to end a note, and he said, “This note should end as a samurai’s sword would cut.” In other words, this note must really end. So the quality of *ma* after that sword cut must be incredibly different from the quality of *ma* when a *shakuhachi* note tapers into almost-silence, and then has a little drop-off, and then comes the *ma*.⁴⁷

Both sound and silence in traditional Japanese music are diverse and significant. A higher quality of silence is infinitely able to enhance a higher sound quality; therefore sound and silence are equal.⁴⁸ Thus, *ma* is a silence with strong tensions. According to Takemitsu,

⁴⁶ Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, 64.

⁴⁷ Toru Takemitsu, Tania Cronin, Hilary Tann. “Afterword,” In *Perspectives of New Music*,” volume 27 no. 2 (Summer 1989), 212.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

... the unique idea of *ma* – the unsounded part of this experience – has at the same time a deep, powerful, and rich resonance that can stand up to the sound. In short, this *ma* this powerful silence, is that which gives life to the sound and removes it from its position of primacy. So it is that sound, confronting the silence of *ma*, yields supremacy in the final expression.⁴⁹

That is why “*ma* cannot be dominated by a person, by a composer. Of course, *ma* can never be determined. *Ma* is the mother of sound and should be very vivid.”⁵⁰

In the same way that darkness and light are inseparable (darkness cannot exist without light, it is merely the *absence* of light), silence and sound are inseparable. Silence cannot exist without sound; it is merely the absence of sound. The significance of silence is found in its length and the length is determined by the instinct of the performer and always related to the sound that frames it.

Interestingly enough, Cage naturally discovered these Japanese musical features.

Just a few weeks ago, I had a very odd experience in a Japanese restaurant in New York. In this restaurant, there was a tape recorder playing Japanese music. Usually, rhythm is stressed, and I don’t particularly like it. I prefer Korean music. In terms of Japanese music, I prefer *shakuhachi* music, the flute suits me better than the *koto*. We were conversing as usual while the music was playing. Little by little, during the gaps in our conversation, I realized that the silences included in this music were extremely long, and that the sounds that occurred were very different from

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Toru Takemitsu, Tania Cronin, Hilary Tann. “Afterword,” In *Perspectives of New Music*,” volume 27 no. 2 (Summer 1989), 213.

each other. I was surprised by my discovery, because the extent of the tape was absolutely unusual, it was very long. And I had never run across that in traditional Japanese music. This piece wasn't destined uniquely for Japanese listeners, but for the entire universe, . . .and it was very, very beautiful. I was unable to recognize any tempo, any periodicity at all. All I was able to identify was the arrival of a few sounds from time to time. I was transported to natural experiences, to my daily life, when I am not listening to music, when sounds simply happen. There is nothing more delicious!⁵¹

November Steps

The two Japanese instruments, the *biwa* and *shakuhachi*, were originally never played together. It is interesting that Takemitsu was attracted by these two inconvenient solo instruments and attempted to form an ensemble with them. In *November Steps*, new and unique techniques are required for the *biwa* and *shakuhachi*, and Takemitsu used original notations for them. (Example 3) Strings, percussion and harps are divided into two groups and placed on the right side and left side. (Example 4) Each group plays different passages as if there are two orchestras. Additionally, he indicates details for strings, at times calling for the use of micro tones. He also writes approximate pitches and lengths of tones. For example, he sometimes specifically instructs the performer to play “the highest tone of the instrument,” indicating that it should be played in one stroke for as long as possible. Takemitsu

⁵¹ John Cage, *For the Birds*, ed. Pierre Belfond (New Hampshire: Marion Boyars Inc., 1981), 200-201.

Example 3

BIWA NOTATION: A 5-stringed instrument is required (Satsuma biwa)
The tuning is as follows: D,E,A,E,E,(1,2,3,4,5)

1 2 3 4 = the strings

V.IV.III.II.I = the number of the fret


V₂ or IV₃ = the degree of tension of the string at the designated fret; 1 to 3 indicates from light to strong tension


▢ = down stroke of the plectrum


∨ = up stroke of the plectrum


• = pluck with finger(s)


▢∨ = quick alternation of the plectrum

 = hit the body of the instrument with the plectrum

 = hit the body of the instrument with the finger, fist or palm


 = rub upward the designated string lightly from the bottom to the top with the point of the plectrum


 = rub upward all strings while hitting the body of the instrument lightly with the plectrum


 = tremolo finely - called *Kuzure* in Japanese


The size of the dot indicates the intensity of the playing.


SHAKUHACHI NOTATION: The first note of the playing is left to the performer's choice, then the performer should concentrate into *the sound* and listen to its changes of colour and intensity.


 = slight changes upward - a small portamento


 = large changes upward - upward glissando


 = opposites of the above


 = jumping within an extremely small interval (upward or downward) from the playing note


 = jumping within an extremely large interval (upward or downward) from the playing note


 = play slowly (it has to be grasped interiorly)


 = play rapidly (it has to be grasped interiorly)

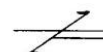
 = from the playing note jump upward or downward to an extreme distance, then move freely as a melody

 = jump upward or downward to a different note close to the playing note

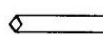
 = jump upward or downward an extreme distance with *Muraiki* playing - playing with much breath

 = jump upward or downward within a small interval with *Muraiki* playing


 = glissando up


 = glissando down


 = make an accent with strong breath

 = *Muraiki* playing (with much breath)

 = play with voice

 = staccatissimo

 = tap the hole of the instrument strongly with the fingers

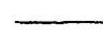
 = *Furiotoshi*

 = *Otoshi*

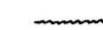
 = *Furikiri*

Vibrations


 = without vibrato

 = *Yokoyuri*

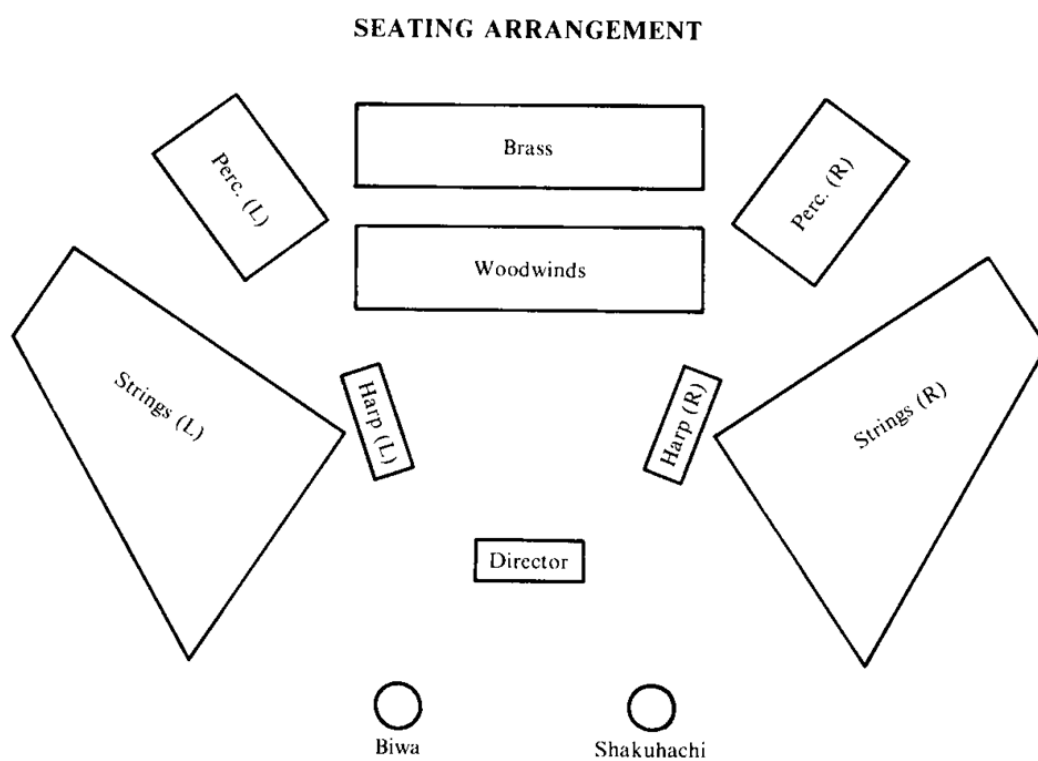
 = *Mawashi-yuri*

 = *Take-yuri*

 = *Tate-yuri*

 = *Komi*

Example 4



(R) and (L) Strings should be placed as far apart as possible

Ibid.

Example 5

Shakuhachi

Biwa

Ibid., 4.

notates only pitch for the *biwa* and *shakuhachi*, not indicating any of the phrasing or rhythm for these two instruments. (Example 5) These details are left to the soloist's discretion.⁵²

In process of composing the piece, Cage's influence can be found.

Takemitsu wrote in *Notes on November Steps*,

5. For *Notations*, edited by John Cage, I wrote the following,

I recognize in notation the same sort of phenomenon as there is in the growth of a constellation or a plant.

There, the most important *changes* cannot be perceived directly, visually. In notation, the coexistence of change and possibility. (Also impossibility.)⁵³

As mentioned previously, Takemitsu used his imagination to unite two different elements, both Western and Japanese sounds, in his music. He remarked in an interview that since the *shakuhachi* has a different structure of overtones than Western instruments, it is very difficult to fuse the two.⁵⁴ His solution in *November Steps* was not to fuse the two different elements, but to contrast them. Listening to the piece, the two sounds seamlessly alternate. For example, after an orchestral

⁵² Luciana Galliano, *Yōgaku, Japanese Music in the Twentieth Century* (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 2002), 242.

⁵³ Takemitsu, *Confronting*, 86.

⁵⁴ Nakano, *Toru Takemitsu, his music and philosophy* (Accessed [25. November 2005]), <http://www.2a.biglob.ne.jp>

passage, there is a section where the trumpet and trombone overlap with the starting passage of the *shakuhachi*. Takemitsu uses several Western instruments, including the harp, as mediation between the two different sounds; however, the two sounds never fuse, essentially. This piece has an original, unique atmosphere. The *shakuhachi* sounds like the wind and the *biwa* sounds mysterious and scary. The two sounds produce an atmosphere of wildness.

The piece requires a great deal of ability and skill from the performers.

Here is an interesting story about the great ability he required in the *shakuhachi* part.

私の仕事場の山荘に彼らを招きました。ある日、尺八の演奏家が来ました。そこで彼に、ひとつの音をできるだけ長く吹いてくれるように頼みました。時間を計ってみると九十秒でした。もっと、と私は言いました。もっとずっと長く吹いて欲しいと。すると彼は肉体の訓練を始めました。私の言葉を真剣に受け取ってくれたのです。三ヶ月後彼は私の仕事場に戻ってきました。今度は二分でした！しかも実に美しい音で、さまざまな色彩に満ちていました。たった一つの音の中にあらゆるものがあつたのです。

I invited the two soloists to my mountain villa where I have my workplace. One day, I asked the *shakuhachi* player to play one tone as long as possible and timed it. It was 90 seconds. I said, "More." I implored him for a longer tone. He started physical training. He took my request seriously. After three months, he came back to my workplace. He could play the tone for two minutes long! Additionally, the tone had beautiful full sounds with a variety of tone colors. There is everything only in one tone.⁵⁵
[Author's translation]

November Steps was premiered by the New York Philharmonic Orchestra

with Seiji Ozawa and called forth a response in the United States. After that, the

⁵⁵ Takemitsu, *Tooi Yobigoe*, 43.

piece was played over 200 times all over the world. A notable point is that the conception was from outside Japan. By turning his eyes toward Japanese culture and music by an American composer, Takemitsu received the commission from an American orchestra, the first performance of this piece, and a great amount of recognition in the United States.

Takemitsu was not on course for membership with the musical elite. For this reason, he was flexible and not trapped by stereotypical views, and could absorb new ideas and produce this new style of music. He always said and wrote that the most significant thing for a composer is to listen carefully to all of the sounds. This concept is one that he learned from both Cage and Japanese culture – to listen to sounds and silence and to feel sounds and silence are two of the ways to make music. Although *November Steps* received a favorable reputation, and Takemitsu found it to be a great experience to compose this piece, he has never composed pieces for Japanese and Western instruments since.

Chapter 7: Toru Takemitsu's Philosophy

In the course of learning Japanese original tradition, Takemitsu created his own musical philosophy. One of the most fundamental elements of Takemitsu's philosophy is summarized in a term he invented, *Oto no Kawa* [stream of sound]. Takemitsu believed that music is taken from the stream of sounds which surround us every day. Takemitsu wrote in a book *Confronting Silence*,

One day in 1948 while riding a crowded subway I came up with the idea of mixing random noise with composed music. More precisely, it was then that I became aware that composing is giving meaning to that stream of sounds that penetrates the world we live in.⁵⁶

This is very interesting that Takemitsu came up with the idea in the same year that Pierre Schaeffer composed the first piece of *musique concrète*, which is based on the same idea. Takemitsu attempted four pieces of *musique concrète* in 1956 and one piece in 1958. However, he soon realized the limitation of *musique concrète* and was offended by Schaeffer's concept.

On one occasion the composer Pierre Schaeffer drew a suggestive diagram that clearly showed the idea behind *musique concrète*, the type of music he originated.

Abstract → Concrete

Concrete → Abstract

Conventional music expressed concrete images by means of abstract musical sounds. Conversely, *musique concrète* tried to express an abstract

⁵⁶ Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, 79.

image by means of everyday concrete sounds. Musical sounds have always been musical by traditional definitions. Schaeffer's idea of *objet sonore* represented the final phase in the development of that tradition. As such, it needs no explanation.

What Schaeffer did was elevate noise to the same level as musical sounds all according to classical aesthetics. Once again, music did not really revive. True, music survives, but simply enlarging the medium will not prevent the same old historical repetition.⁵⁷

In another essay, he wrote,

Basically music depends on mathematical organization. Through no fault of his own, the composer exercises his mathematical alchemy in pursuit of universal beauty. But our task, not limited only to music, is to reveal things that come to us through our spiritual efforts. Art is nothing but the actualization of the creative spirit. Pieces of music are facts captured by the spirit, using sound as a medium. In that sense pieces of music are concrete things.⁵⁸

To Takemitsu each sound must be sufficiently concrete to make a particular impression on the human mind. Thus, in Takemitsu's concept music expressed concrete images by means of concrete sound. In addition, he wrote about Cage's music:

For John Cage, music is really his giving life to those things such as relationships, movement, dynamics – things that are called *music* and are within the framework of music but are really not living sound. That is why Cage's "freedom" has a bitterness about it when compared to that of Schaeffer."⁵⁹

Although Takemitsu felt the limitations of *musique concrète*, the concept of

⁵⁷ Takemitsu, "John Cage," In *Confronting Silence*, 28.

⁵⁸ Takemitsu, "A Personal Approach," In *Confronting Silence*, 79.

⁵⁹ Takemitsu, "John Cage," In *Confronting Silence*, 28.

“stream of sound” consistently dominated Takemitsu’s music. The *Requiem for Strings* (1957), which was the piece acknowledged by Stravinsky, is an example of this concept.⁶⁰ The piece was composed between the third and fourth *musique concrète* pieces. It begins with the emergence of a single *pianissimo* note of violin from the silence. The tempo is extremely slow, “it is certainly hard to perceive any higher-level metrical organization.”⁶¹ He wrote in the program notes of *Requiem for Strings* that the piece has no beginning and no ending. Plainly described, he simply extracted a segment from the ‘stream of sound’ running through humanity and the world.⁶² At the end of the piece, the ambience of the beginning comes back and sounds fade out as if the piece gave the audience a glimpse of just a part of overwhelming sadness. Though the piece is not cast in any traditional form, this gives the piece a sense of balance and symmetry. Takemitsu frequently used this technique of matching the end of a piece with its opening. The idea probably comes from the concept of ‘stream of sound.’

⁶⁰ Stravinsky commented about *Requiem for Strings*, on the “sincerity” and “intensity” of his music, and “music as passionate as this should be created by a man of such short stature.” This event changed Takemitsu’s fortune as a composer. Takemitsu joyfully told his wife, “How can he say that? He himself was short!”

⁶¹ Peter Burt, *The Music of Toru Takemitsu* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 51.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 53.

Chapter 8: The Japanese Garden and its Influence on the Music of Takemitsu and Cage

One of the significant objects which both composers Takemitsu and Cage were interested in and pursued is Japanese gardens. Japanese traditional music and gardens have many common aesthetic concepts. Roughly, understanding the Japanese garden is necessary to understand the musical concept of both Takemitsu and Cage. Takemitsu was inspired by the method of laying out a Japanese garden in the particular way of the Muromachi period (1334-1573).⁶³ This chapter focuses on a stone garden at a Zen temple, *ryoanji*, which was built in Kyoto during the Muromachi period in 1450. Additionally, the inspiration for a series of pieces by Cage, *Ryoanji*, came from one of the gardens of the temple.

Like most Buddhist temples, *ryoanji* has several buildings for different functions. On the north of its precincts the temple's main hall, a Budhisattava palace, and a tea-ceremony house are assembled. A pond is arranged on the south of the temple. The pond, on which people enjoyed boat parties, is the center of several styles of gardens. A trail is put up for strolling through the gardens, which are

⁶³ Hideaki Onishi, *Toru Takemitsu's Japanese Gardens: An application of Superset/Subset Networks to the Analysis of Three Orchestral Compositions*. Ph.D. diss., (University of Washington, 2004) 87.

modeled or duplicated scenic sites with *tsuki yama* (artificial small mountains), isles, bridges and stones. This garden style is called a *chisen-kaiyu shiki* garden (circular landscape garden). Scenic overlooks, a tea house and arbors are set in places along the path as areas to rest. The stone garden looks out onto the south of the main temple. Of all the gardens, the stone garden, the so-called dry-landscape garden that Cage loved, is the most popular.

Garden Music of Takemitsu

Takemitsu's interest in the Japanese garden is well known. He liked Japanese gardens because "they do not reject people."⁶⁴ He particularly loved the stroll-type circular landscape garden because "there one can walk freely, pause to view the entire garden or gaze at a single tree. Plants, rocks and sand show changes, constant changes."⁶⁵ Although he never mentioned how exactly he transferred the gardens into his music, he frequently confessed that he was inspired by Japanese gardens.

Arc for Piano and Orchestra (1963), which was composed one year after "Cage Shock," is a great example that is based on the idea of Japanese gardens.

⁶⁴ Takemitsu, *Confronting*, 95.

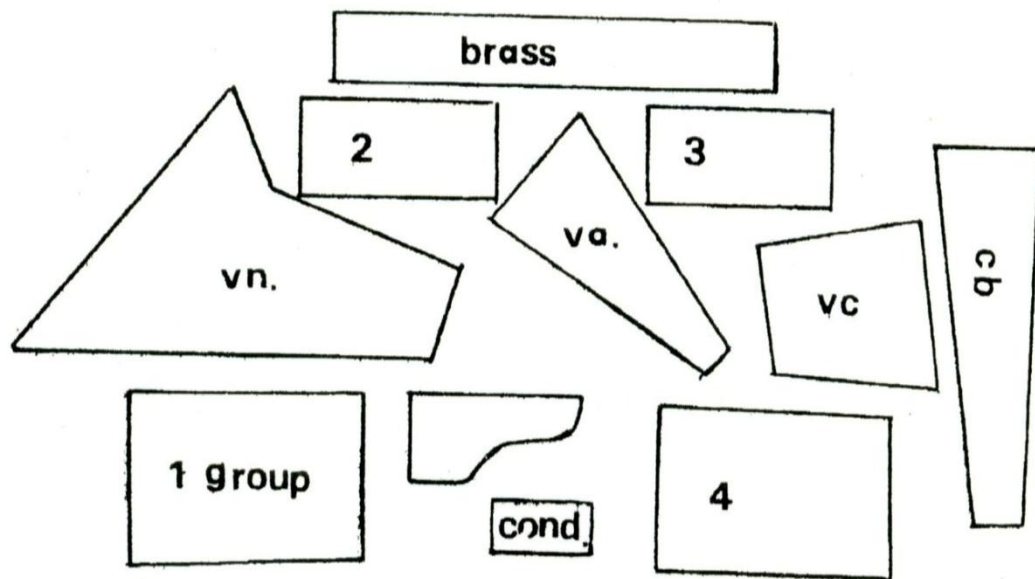
⁶⁵ Ibid.

Takemitsu was inspired by viewing a Japanese circular landscape (or tour) garden. The appearance of a circular garden changes depending on the viewer's perspective. The garden designer has each of these points in mind as he plans the garden. There are two kinds of objects in a garden: changing objects such as grass, flowers and trees, and unchanging objects such as rocks and sand. The changing objects may decay if they don't have the suitable environment, although it is perfect placement as a design. The garden designer decides the placement of all materials with great care and calculation.

In *Arc for Piano and Orchestra*, the orchestra is divided into four groups of mixed instruments, along with one group of brass and one group of strings. Takemitsu indicated the places on the stage of each instrument and conductor (Example 6). The four groups of mixed instruments are supposed to have their own time structures: grass (G), tree (T), rock (R), and sand (S) representing four different objects in the garden. (Example 7) Takemitsu employed chance music. He noted,

- I. Grass and flowers: a group of undetermined soloists, rapidly changing mobile forms. These solo parts recur in heterocyclic time relation.
- II. Trees: do not change as rapidly as grass and flowers. This group, however, is composed as an indeterminate, gradually changing mobile
- III. Rocks: unchanging except as they appear from different viewpoints. These are written as stable forms in a determinate manner as a type of timbral variations.
- IV. Sand and earth: enduring and stable, exist unaffected by the total tempo. This is a metagalaxy, a role taken by the percussion.

Example 6



Toru Takemitsu, *Arc part I*, Paris: Salabert, 1963

The piano represents a stroller in this musical garden. There is a chance music section in which the pianist (stroller) may decide the order of two sections during performance. Takemitsu wrote “I would like to lay out only one musical garden that would lead to the infinite time”⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Takemitsu, *Tooi Yobigoe*, 82.

The other significant influence from Japanese gardens apparent in Takemitsu's music is the multiple sound sources of the orchestra. It is well known that Takemitsu was interested in Debussy's orchestration, which has innumerable musical focuses. This idea comes from the analogy to a Japanese circular landscape garden. Takemitsu attempted to build up his own multi-focal orchestra, "which is a small sound garden, in order to reflect the mechanism of this universe in it."⁶⁷ This attempt is reflected in the placement of the instruments. Since his pieces required incredibly sensitive sound, the instrumental placement was decided with the greatest care.⁶⁸ Like a design of a garden, it was necessary to indicate meticulous placement of the instruments.

Stone Garden

While Takemitsu was interested in the circular landscape garden, Cage was particularly interested in the dry-landscape garden. The Zen Buddhist temple *ryoanji* has a well known stone garden. The simple placement of fifteen stones

⁶⁷ Hideaki Onishi, *Toru Takemitsu's Japanese Gardens: An application of Superset/Subset Networks to the Analysis of Three Orchestral Compositions*. Ph.D. diss., (University of Washington, 2004) 85.

⁶⁸ Yoshiyasu Hamamoto, "An Examination of the Relationship between Sound and Instrument Placement in the Piano Ensemble Works of Toru Takemitsu," In *Hiroshima University Kyouikugaku Kenkyuka Kiko* volume 2 no. 53 (2004), 424.

among white small-grain sand is a design of high technique and deep meaning. The white sand is spread on a perfectly flat terrain and has solid parallel lines drawn to depict water. Circular parallel lines are drawn around the stones to depict the movement of waves around an island. The various sizes of stones seem to be small islands in the water. Water is the dominant element in the Japanese garden whether in the form of a spring, a waterfall, a stream, or a pond. However, no water is employed in this type of garden, but instead, is represented by sand. Thus, the garden appears to be full of water without the presence of real water. It is possible the water may be a pond or ocean depending on the viewer.

In general, stone is one of the most significant objects of any type of the traditional Japanese gardens. The most distinctive difference between Western countries and Japan is the treatment of the stone. While a stone is usually processed by shaving or engraving in Western art, in Japan the original shape and texture of the stone is retained. This statement is common to the fundamental differences in Japanese and Western music's aesthetic values that were mentioned in chapter 6. This naturalness is crucial to an understanding of the essence of stone arrangements in Japanese gardens.

Stones are the central structural elements of a garden. The peculiar aesthetic sense of Japanese people is to discover beauty in a wild stone and to give it a

new life by providing a new angle and placement without retouching. The spirit of stone arrangements embraced two elements: the use of a material provided by nature and the work of the artist who manifests the life of the stones and enhances their beauty, turning them into a work of art.

In the stone garden of *ryoanji*, fifteen stones are placed. The number fifteen is considered the perfect number because the moon takes fifteen days to become full. Additionally, the stones are arranged from east to west, or left to right, and divided into five groups of 5, 2, 3, 2, 3 in number. The groups can be combined to form the series 7-5-3 which Japanese think to be propitious. Among the small gardens around the pond, the stone garden belongs to the main temple and is surrounded by a wall. Thus, the garden can be seen only from inside of the temple. Additionally, people should not walk in the garden because of the lined sand. This garden was designed for seeing from the verandah-cum-corridor of the temple. The fifteen stones, however, are not able to be perfectly seen from any position of the verandah. One stone is always out of sight from the viewer. According to one theory, it comes from a Zen Buddhism admonition that a person should accept all states of things and have no desire for perfection. If a person achieves perfection, there is nothing to improve, and they can only decline.

There is another significant feature of Japanese gardens that differentiates them from Western gardens. The Japanese gardens attempt to unify the nature of outside and indoors. On the contrary, Western gardens are designed as places separate from buildings. People enjoy the garden as a different world from inside, even if the garden is facing the building. At *ryoanji* the verandah-cum-corridor is constructed on the outer side of the building slightly lower than the floor of the room of the temple, thus it lies vertically between the room and the garden. The boundaries from the room, to the corridor, to the garden are usually open air from the floor to almost the ceiling. In the case of inclement weather or confidential talk, the space is closed by several sliding doors. If there is a window, it is placed between the corridor and the room at the best height for lighting decorations such as pottery, arranged flowers or hanging art. The decorations are periodically changed according to the season and scene of the garden. In the case of the stone garden at *ryoanji*, the white sand plays a role to lead day light into the dark room.

Garden Music of Cage

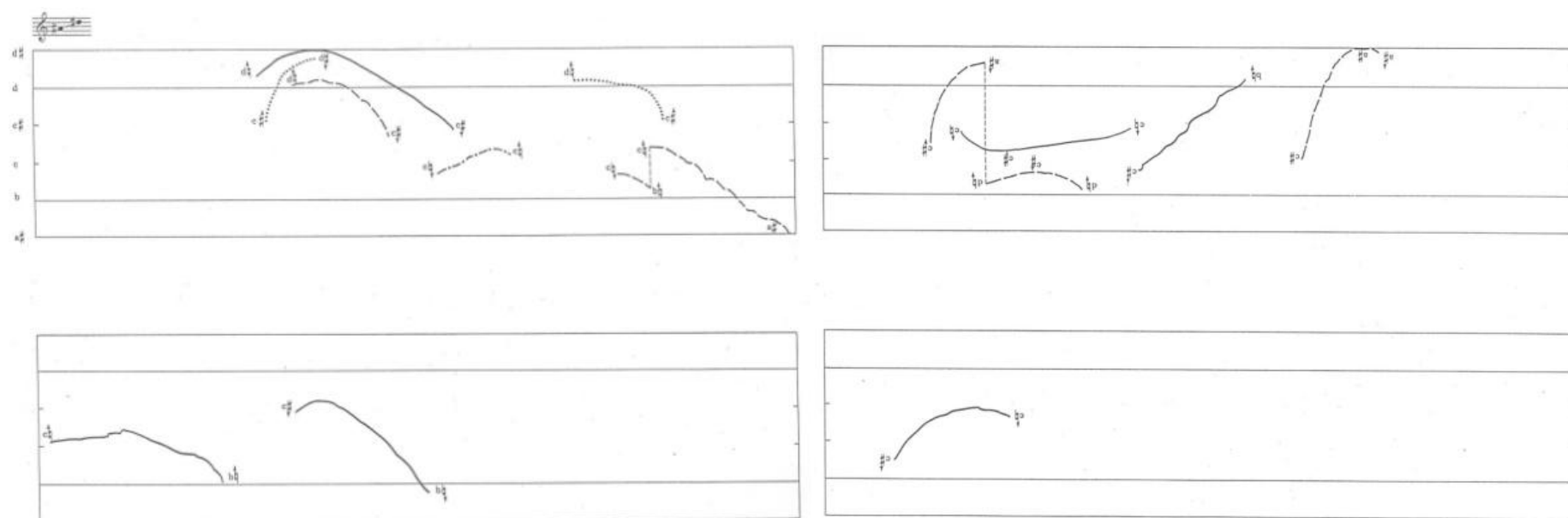
Cage composed a series of pieces based on the stone garden of the Japanese Zen Buddhist temple, *ryoanji*. He completed six pieces of *Ryoanji*: for oboe (1983-1985), for double bass (1983-1985), for voice (1983-1985), for percussion

(1983-1985), for flute (1983-1984) and for trombone (1985), and an unfinished piece for cello (1992). As mentioned in chapter 2, Takemitsu confessed “John Cage’s approach [to Japanese culture is] extremely logical.” Cage’s approach to *Ryoanji* is very simple and logical.

In 1983, Cage started a series of pencil drawings of fifteen different stones entitled *Where R=Ryoanji*. About that time, an oboist, James Ostryniec, asked Cage to write a piece for his performance in Tokyo, which resulted in the first part of *Ryoanji*. Cage used the same group of stones which he used for drawing for composing music. The method of composition outlines the shape of stones with curved lines drawn between pitches on staves. (Example 8) The curves of the lines should be played as glissandi. He employed four different lines: a straight (unbroken) line, a dashed line, a dotted and dashed line and a dotted line.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ John Cage, *Musicae: Cage Muses on Words, Art, Music*, ed. Joan Retallack (New England: Wesleyan University Press, 1996), 240.

Example 8



John Cage, *Ryoanji for Oboe* (New York: Henmar Press Inc., 1983), 8-9.

Each style of line indicates a different sound. It is the responsibility of the performer to determine the sound for each part (or line). In some places the lines overlap, which is impossible for a soloist to play. In that case, pre-recorded sounds are employed to allow the soloist to perform double or triple lines. When the lines overlap, they are always different kinds of lines; the same styles of lines never overlap.⁷⁰ For instance, a dotted line and dashed line may intersect but two dotted lines may never overlap.

Each piece is comprised of eight or nine songs, and each song depicts a garden. A song fills two pages, each of which contains two rectangular staves. The staves represent the area of the garden in which Cage put the “stones,” the different style of lines mentioned above.⁷¹

The six solo pieces that make up the entire work of *Ryoanji* can be performed in a multiplicity of combinations. The solos are always accompanied by percussion or an orchestral obligato of around 20 members. For example, Cage indicated in the oboe part, “the percussion piece begins and ends a performance, in each case with about two measures. It continues during silences of any length

⁷⁰ John Cage, *Ryoanji for Oboe*, New York: Hembar Press Inc., 1983.

⁷¹ John Cage, *Musicage: Cage Muses on Words, Art, Music*, ed. Joan Retallack (New England: Wesleyan University Press, 1996), 242.

between oboe pieces.” The soloist represents the stones of the garden, the accompaniment the raked sand.

The percussion part does not specify particular instruments but calls for two contrasting sounds, wood and metal, to be played in unison. The meters for the percussion part are twelve, thirteen, fourteen or fifteen. (Example 9) The orchestra parts are a series of quarter notes like in the percussion part. The twenty musicians of the orchestra each independently choose a single sound which they use for the entire performance. Each instrument’s attacks should be close, but not exactly together.

Example 9

The notation consists of seven staves, each representing a different meter. The first staff starts with a double bar line and a repeat sign, followed by a measure number 13 and a series of rhythmic symbols. The subsequent staves are labeled with measure numbers 12, 13, 12, 13, 15, 14, and 15 respectively. Each staff contains a sequence of rhythmic symbols (vertical lines with flags) representing quarter notes, with some staves having a repeat sign at the end.

At the beginning of the oboe part, Cage described, “Each two pages are a ‘garden’ of sounds. The glissandi are to be played smoothly and as much as is possible like sound events in nature rather than sounds in music.”⁷² The concept of “sound events in nature” is very interesting. Cage attempted to avoid the music in the Western musical sense which is always separated from nature. As mentioned earlier about the differentiation between Western and Japanese gardens, in Western music performers and audiences are in a concert hall surrounded by thick walls which cut off all sounds from the outside world. Cage’s concept of sound quality is analogous to the ideas of the fusion of nature with the design of Japanese gardens and also the fundamental concept of “good” sound of Japanese traditional music that was mentioned in chapter 6. Here, the sounds Cage called for are not the imitation of nature. He required substantial and meaningful sounds as if they are taken from everyday noises. This sound concept resembles the concept of *Oto no Kawa*, stream of sound, which Takemitsu invented in 1948 (See chapter 7).

Both composers were inspired by Japanese gardens and attempted to depict musical gardens in their works. However, the results were utterly different. Takemitsu’s approach was more abstract. His musical garden was approached from a person, a stroller’s, point of view. Performers are required to express the

⁷² John Cage, *Ryoanji for Oboe*, New York: Hembar Press Inc., 1983.

ever-changing nature and feelings of a person. His music is, if anything, more like Neo-Romanticism. On the other hand, Cage's musical garden is very rational, in Takemitsu's words, certainly "very logical." Cage created rules based on a Japanese garden, like playing a game. A human's emotional feelings do not lie between performer and sounds. In Cage's music, performers are required to play substantial but not particularly pleasant sounds.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

Many composers have frequently modified their musical style several times, although they eventually established their own style. This might be a reflection of the rapidly changing chaotic times of the twentieth century. Igor Stravinsky transformed his style from Russian nationalism to neo-classic or neo-baroque to twelve-tone. Karlheinz Stockhausen started to compose with the twelve-tone technique and serial music, and then adopted chance music. After that he developed a penchant for Eastern mysticism and became a Wagner-like opera composer. John Cage started composing with a preference for rhythmic music using percussion and prepared piano, then created chance music with graphic notation, and finally expanded his style to live electronic music. Among these twentieth century composers, Takemitsu's musical style was practically coherent in comparison to the other composers. When he was interested in avant-garde music from the late 1950s to early 1960s, his music had certainly more sharpness and tension, or energy of youth, yet consistently contained warmth of humanity. Cage confessed to Ichiyanagi in the 1960s that he did not like the sweetness of Takemitsu's music, but liked him as a person.⁷³ As Takemitsu's music progressed, the sweetness that Cage pointed out had

⁷³ Toshi Ichiyanagi, *Ongaku toiu Itonami* (Tokyo: NTT Shuppan Inc., 1998), 84.

been more prominent in his late period. His music became less radical. He frequently used ABA form, traditional triads and tuneful melodies as if his music returned to a period in the past.

The influences of Debussy and Messiaen have been pointed out in Takemitsu's music. Undoubtedly, their music has something in common such as the intensity behind sweetness of sound, the use of tone color and modal scales. However, while the music of Debussy and Messiaen sounds narrative and sometimes even dramatic, the music of Takemitsu sounds reticent and more subdued. Takemitsu's pieces are in relatively slow tempi and never flashy. Each sound is embraced by silence, or *ma*. Certainly, Debussy and Messiaen were interested in Eastern music and art and they adopted the musical elements and the exoticism in their music. However, they did not particularly pay attention to *ma* of Japanese art.

Some critics pointed out that Takemitsu's use of silence is the influence of Anton Webern. Webern frequently used silent pauses; however, Takemitsu's use of silence is in his own unique style in respect to the definition of silence, or *ma*. As Peter Burt described, Takemitsu applied *ma*, "the temporally unquantifiable, metaphysical continuum of silence that ... is consciously integrated between the notes played".⁷⁴ Takemitsu could perceive the sense from his native Japanese music and

⁷⁴ Peter Burt, *The Music of Toru Takemitsu*, 237.

art and established his unique concept of *ma* in his music. He employed *ma* in a different way from silence in a Western sense. In that respect, the achievement of “Cage Shock,” which made Takemitsu return to his native Japanese music and art, had immense meaning.

Cage was probably the first Western composer who realized and was interested in silence or *ma*. As mentioned at the beginning of this document, although both composers reacted to their musical ideas from the same elements from Japanese culture, their music is not similar in terms of stylistic and aesthetic tendencies. Takemitsu’s concept of *ma* is philosophical and abstract. In Takemitsu’s music *ma* and sound are always next to each other. He frequently used the words *ma wo ikasu*, which mean “enliven the *ma*.” Thus, he attempted to inspire sounds with new life by making silence more vivid. Similarly, Cage’s music incorporates silence and noise side by side. However, Cage’s concept of sound is simpler than Takemitsu’s. Whereas Takemitsu favored more refined instrumental sounds, Cage’s music draws on everyday, nonmusical sounds perceived by most listeners as mere noise. His concept is based on two sources: first, the feeling of “the simultaneity of the presence and absence of all things,”⁷⁵ which he learned from Zen Buddhism; second, the fact that there is no perfect silence, which he learned from an

⁷⁵ John Cage, *For the Bird*, 46.

anechoic experience. Once, at Harvard University, Cage entered an anechoic room which had six walls made of special material and no echoes. He heard a high sound of his nervous system in operation and a low sound of his blood in circulation. He realized it is impossible to make perfect silence and there is never an empty time.⁷⁶ Thus, the silence we can experience is already sound.⁷⁷ .

Both composers were well known not to submit to any musical authority.

Ichihyanagi said about Cage in an interview:

The most important thing is the process or the moment of now. The result is not whether the subject matter is good or bad. The root of Cage is an anarchic lifestyle. Unlike Stockhausen or Boulez, Cage never had any support from the government. That is why he was poor [*laughing*], but he never needed to bow down to authority. Japanese and European composers had lost this anarchic lifestyle.⁷⁸

Cage also confessed that he tried to avoid universities as much as possible because they are too close to the government.⁷⁹ In Takemitsu's case, fortunately or unfortunately, the Japanese government had not positively supported artistic activities. He also never worked under the patronage of universities.

⁷⁶ John Cage, *Silence*, 8.

⁷⁷ John Cage, *For the Bird*, 39.

⁷⁸ Toshi Ichihyanagi, *Bridge-Building from the 1960s Music Scene* (Accessed [25. February 2005]), <http://www.ntticc.or.jp>

⁷⁹ John Cage, *For the Bird*, 89.

The fact that both composers' compositional activities were not patronized might have caused them to consider some fundamental questions that shaped their musical concept. What is music in the first place? What is the difference between sound and noise? What is silence? Takemitsu frequently mentioned that the same ideas he created were also invented by someone else at the same time; the important thing is how the ideas were put into practice.⁸⁰ In that respect, both composers certainly rendered remarkable services to twentieth century music.

Nowadays, technology has developed and accessibility has made things easy. In the musical world, people can easily access sounds from synthesizers, computers, and sampling machines, and can semi-permanently keep those sounds on a hard disc. Thus, sounds do not die away anymore. Now, professional musicians are facing chaotic times, perhaps because of plentiful information and developing technology. People start to lose the sensitivity of their ears and tend to use the existing sounds instead of making new ones. Modern composition appears to be deadlocked. Perhaps it is time for musicians and performers to follow in the footsteps of Cage and Takemitsu and get back to the basics, in which the only true common denominator is sound.

⁸⁰ Toru Takemitsu. *Oto Chinmoku to Hakariaeruhodoni* [*Facing Sound and Silence*]. (Tokyo: Shinchosha, 1991), 46.

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